

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

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No. W.S. 863

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 863.....

Witness

H. Warren Hutchinson,
"Sindrim",
179 Rathgar Road,
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of Sinn Fein, Glasgow, 1913 - ;
Member of I.R.A., Glasgow, later.

Subject.

His associations with Sinn Fein and I.R.A.,
Glasgow, 1913-1922.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

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File No. S. 1995.....

Form B.S.M. 2

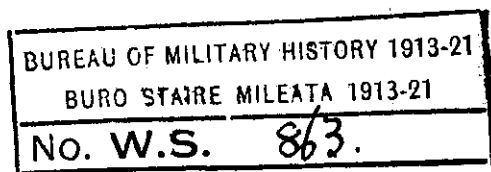
179 Rathgar Rd.

A Cara,

I am sorry about the delay in sending this, but I asked my son to type it and then to deliver it to you personally.

I took the liberty of giving a copy to An Taoiseach - on the whole I am afraid it is not what you really wanted, but it does show, that everyone in Scotland and also in Ireland treated me as a soldier not as a 'Sin Finner' or worse still as both.

(Sgd.) H.W. Hutchinson



M I L I T A R Y H I S T O R Y

My first 'military' drilling was at school, in Saint Aloysius' College, Glasgow. One of our masters was an ex-British soldier, but he had Fenian blood in his veins. Now on St. Patrick's Day in the year 1885, or thereabouts, we were 'attacked' by Protestant boys from 3 large schools (who outnumbered us by over 10 to 1) shouting "Helter, slaughter, holy Boyne water, scatter the Papishes every one! Are you a Billy or a Dan?" We scattered all right; but our drill master taught us 'military' drill - how to form companies and regiments, how to attack and how to resist; and also how to box. We won out in the end.

About this time a movement started which might not at first sight appear to have any military significance, but was fundamentally (and 'pugilistically!') Irish nationalist (and Catholic). There was a Junior and Senior Schools' Football League, and we formed the Loyola Senior and Gonzaga Junior F.C.'s. My brother was captain of Senior and I of Junior, and we got to the top of each League. Several members were from Lanarkshire, and among them a fighting group which founded the famous club (Glasgow) Celtic, recently fighting to have our national flag flying.

My next actual military experience was during the Home Rule period. I happened to live near a tobacconist named Sergeant-Major O'Carrol, who, when we got friendly, suggested that we might form an Irish company in the First Lanark Rifle Volunteers (the 'Greys'), the most prominent Volunteer regiment in G. Britain.

'Great', wasn't it? - but wait a minute. It was formed to get a military training in case there would be trouble.

We became the best company at class firing, but we scored bull's eyes on the 'wrong' target.

Then there was a 'big review' before the Duke of Cambridge and grand march past the saluting base. When ordered 'eyes left' we were far and away the best and got great applause, but we turned 'eyes right', then marching back 'eyes right' every alternate one stepped back - our line was higgledy-piggledy - that was the end, but we learned what we wanted.

Then:

1913:

The Volunteers were founded, and we drilled in a space beside one of the largest iron foundries in the world - MacFarlanes, Possilpark. The officer was Captain McGlinchy, who, I think, was in the First Lanark Company. I am not sure whether Joe Robinson was there then - but it was about this time that he was sent to Peterhead prison. I remember there was some trouble at the church at Partick.

I then joined the second branch of Sinn Fein. Arthur Griffith came over. I think it was called Éire Og. But as I had become President of the S. V de P. in our parish and those meetings were held, like those of Sinn Fein, after Mass, I couldn't attend both, and Sinn Fein had to be the one forfeited. Shortly after, however, I joined the I.R.B. We had to take the oath. When I went to confession I asked the priest (Dean McInerney of Partick, with whom I think Joe Robinson had the trouble) could I do so. He said: NO! But my brother-in-law (Robert McElhinney) did join, and he came over for the Rising. So I did not know; but when a number came down from the North, they were told the Rising had been cancelled. Among those were Denis (Dinny) McCullagh and O'Reilly of the Irish National Assurance Company.

Then the Rising and the executions. The only one I knew was Connolly; we had a mutual friend in Glasgow named Bradley, in whose house I met him several times.

Then of course Sinn Fein spread like wildfire and was practically another name for the I.R.A. - certainly in Glasgow and in Scotland as a whole it was mainly so. I joined up in the dual capacity after returning from our honeymoon (July 6, 1916)

The Sinn Fein headquarters were in Renfield Street. I became treasurer after Sean Flood - now in Dublin. The income was then £700 - from about a dozen clubs. Then income and clubs mounted and mounted up till it was £22,000 and 88 clubs in 1922. Every penny of that went to the movement. Jack O'Sheehan became organiser when we had about 28 clubs. Most clubs were raided frequently. We had also a weekly paper, which I got printed and Jack O'Sheehan edited. I kept a record of every member, in a code intelligible only to myself, impossible for anyone else to solve. My house was raided 15 times. I had taken the list home and was writing it up at 3 a.m. one Sunday, when the 'tecs came again and got all the lists, which they sent up to Somerset House, London. But they never got any name and finally returned the lists to me.

I am afraid Anno Domini is playing tricks with my memory. But anyway I came over in 1922, and on arrival I was challenged by the younger brother of the then President of Sinn Fein in Scotland who strange to say was the only member of that organisation in that country to become a Free Stater. I made my way up past Moran's

Hotel, and as I was dashing across they were firing from the roofs at each corner and I had to jump across the body of a poor woman just shot dead at my feet, I continued up and turned left. I came down by Findlater's Church. I turned again to the left at Parnell's Monument and then down Marlborough St. I made my way to the back of Hamon's Hotel (now the Gresham) and tried to get in but just as I got there it was being evacuated; I was shoved aside. At that moment Cathal Brugha rushed out shouting 'No surrender'.

I should have stated earlier that Sinn Fein staged a number of tremendously successful public meetings for Arthur Griffith. Every available hall was taken in Glasgow, Edinburgh, etc. In front of Saint Andrew's Hall, which was claimed to be next in size to the Albert Hall, there was a platoon of I.R.A. men with rifles; it electrified the country. And then it became known that the halls were taken by me under the name of the "Gaelic Association" and that a director of John Miller Ltd. had done so. I was called before the Magistrates (Aldermen) and told: "You took these halls for the Gaelic Association" which they said was 'Scotch'. I said "No; Gaelic is Irish there could be 'Scotch Gaelic'."

So a Board meeting was called and I was told: "If you give up your connection with 'Sin Fin' for 3 months, it will be all right". It was at the height of the Black and Tan war and they thought we were about beaten. My reply was: "No. If my country is going down in mud and blood, well I am going down with it".

So I had to resign. My income then was £1200 per annum and the Chairman had stated that he would resign when he had made £50,000 - and I was to succeed him, which would have meant an income of £3500 per annum. So my continuing

loss would be very great. A number of years afterwards I was back in Glasgow and was told that I need not have resigned.

Of course, they acted in this way because they regarded me as a soldier.

I then started a business with a partner - Hutchinson & Daly, Ltd. Daly was not Irish but a Scotch Protestant Freemason. Shortly after that there was an election in the North, and Mr. MacEntee got out a clever paper under a bogus name - 'The Unionist', I think. I got it printed, and we posted it to the individual voters in Belfast, and the police were very helpful. The pillar boxes were stuffed. This was done for about ten days before the election.

Then it began to be known it was not really a Unionist paper and copies came back by the hundreds, by the thousands - many of them soiled with human filth, or torn, or covered with filthy writing, or all three together. Then a mob gathered and smashed our windows, then the police came along and ransacked the premises, and as luck or bad luck would have it I had received under a respectable Scottish name a large number of letters containing stamps or postal orders for the I.R.A. signed by numbers which again were impossible for them to translate from my index.

But that was the end of that.

Deportation:

As I stated, my house was raided over 15 times. I lived on the top flat and my Scottish neighbours were all friendly and sympathetic.

The police wore rubber boots and had a kind of whistle which got on our nerves and would waken us up at 2 a.m. thinking we heard them; and knowing we had only imagined it we would not get up. But finally there came a time when my wife said: "They are there at last".

It was so. The Deputy Chief Constable said: "Well, Mr. Hutchinson, we have come to take you this time". He knew me very well and said he admired me and there was no one he would like less to do this to. I said: "Let me see your warrant - it only says to deport me, but what is the charge?" He replied: "I only know I have to arrest you and have you deported". We argued for two hours, with the Black Maria prison van chugging away at the bottom of the close. So he sent it on to the Central Police Office and wired for the Chief Constable, who knew me also (I had been a member of the Town Council, etc.) He came and said the same thing. So he hired a motor-car (at my expense) and we arrived in state at the Central Police Office. The others were all lined up impatiently waiting, angry at me asking each official's name, and saying: "You will get us all into trouble". I was taken to be photographed (like Fogra Tora), but I made a rush at the camera-man, knocked him over, and smashed his mounted camera. There was also an attempt to get my finger-prints, but I had half-a-dozen men sprawling about on the floor.

However, we were all taken on board a torpedo-boat destroyer. We were huddled in an underdeck 'cabin' railed in with rope. The Commander came along and asked who was the officer in charge; and so I was brought up to his cabin on deck.

He was quite friendly and said he had a great respect for 'these Sin Finners', he had once been ambushed and "by God, there was a chap with a machine-gun who banged away and we got the worst of it". This chap, whose name was Quin, was actually on the boat, and by some mistake, and was not on the list. The Commander was cordial and we had cigars and champagne.

On arrival, it was very wet; I had three notes on scraps of paper, folded up, without envelopes - on two my wife's address, making out a cheque, and the other to Roslyn Mitchell - then Attorney-General in the first Labour Government (Ramsay MacDonald's) - all three marked: 'For the love of God and Ireland please post' - and they all arrived. Mitchell was a personal friend, a business customer and political associate. I had several other friends in the Cabinet, such as John Wheatley, Johnston - one-time editor of 'Forward', where I got P.J. Little's paper printed - Patrick Dollan, ultimately Lord Provost, now Sir Patrick Dollan, Tom Kerr, now Lord Provost of Glasgow - who spoke at the Saint Patrick's Day concert in Glasgow this year.

When we arrived at Mountjoy Paudeen O'Keefe was Deputy Governor. I had been more friendly with him than with anyone else in the movement up till then. We were 'interviewed' two at a time, with me was Maurice Friez (brother-in-law of Mrs. Ryan of the Monument Creamery). Now two nights before our arrest P.J. Little was staying with me, and the police called to see if he was really (as they, quite rightly, suspected) the editor of 'Old Ireland' - which had previously been called 'New Ireland'. They searched P.J. and I stood close to him; he slipped papers out of his back pocket and I put them into my

back pocket. So when Paudeen 'interviewed' us, he of course got us - and I had forgotten I had P.J.'s papers. On the front page was an article - headed in big type 'Two-Gun Paudeen' - who, when he saw it, said "I see I was good sport for you over there - you are now good sport for me here - you" (meaning me) "are going down to the basement, you know what that means". I said: "No, I have never had the 'advantage' of having been in prison before". He said: "You will damn soon know" - and I did.

I was put into a cell next the latrine. I was so dog-tired I practically collapsed on the floor and put my bundle under my head. In the morning on awakening I found myself covered about an inch thick with a mass of insects and filth, which makes me shudder to this day. I only learned later that I was in the condemned cell.

Apart from this the drunken armed guards tortured us in every way, fiendishly. After four or five days I said to Friez: "How long could you stand this?" He said: "I can't stand any more or I'll go mad".

I must however say that Paudeen just saved my life. A guard rushed into my cell, swearing and mad drunk, and swung the butt end of his rifle at me, but just at that second Paudeen rushed in and caught his arm and diverted the blow so that it struck the window bars, breaking one.

It transpired that Roslyn Mitchell had realised that a mistake had been made and ordered us to be transferred to one of the wings upstairs, where we were moderately treated. I was in the first cell, next door to Paddy McGrath and Ned Hourigan. Then I was specially treated and changed to another wing, where my cell was close to Dr. Ryan's and Farnan's, with Dr. Conn Murphy on the other side.

Finally after three months we were liberated, and again P. O'Keeffe was kind and again he gave me kind treatment, on the lorry to the steamer - and as is known he ultimately became sympathetic to Fianna Fail, along with his sister Mrs. Wyse Power.

On arrival in Glasgow we had a great reception, bands, etc. and I was interviewed by the Press.

I might say here that when we were deported, my wife and Joe Brown's wife, gave out some circulars outside a church in Gargad district - which used to be a most 'Irish' one - but the P.P., Father Lawton, brother of Sir ... Lawton, gave a denunciation off the altar of certain objectionable people who were distributing handbills, and the congregation got furious and knocked them down and jumped on them.

As usual in Westminster there was no Act of Parliament through which you could not drive a horse and cart. So, an enabling act was brought into the Commons, and a tribunal formed of three Law Lords for England and the same for Scotland.

The Irish from England opted for a tribunal - there was only a small proportion of army men amongst them. I induced the 'Scottish', practically all I.R.A., to settle out of court. The result was that the 'English' got awarded very small recompense; think of Art O'Brien who got only £200 and was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Whereas the 'Scottish' got all round about £400, Joe Robinson the highest. I refused to think of it and tried to get them to realise that they were not on trial. An English lawyer named Mr. Burgin sent down forms on which we were to fill in our activities. I said we

were not on trial. Then Roslyn Mitchell asked Herbert Morrison (ex-Deputy Prime Minister) to come and see me.

So I went through to the Treasury Board in Edinburgh to see two of the Law Lords, and I had them almost sweating blood. The amount offered went up and up and stuck at £1360. I refused. They said that was the limit. So I returned to Glasgow and went up to report to Roslyn Mitchell. He said: "How did you get on?" I said: "£1360". He retorted: "Splendid". I said: "I'm not taking it." "Oh, you are the biggest fool I know". Just then Morrison came in, he must have been on the same train, and he tipped me on the shoulder and said: "Just a minute - I want to see Mr. Mitchell". The two of them soon came out smiling and said: "It's all right - £1560". Again the same old answer - "I'm not taking it". Morrison said: "Well, if you don't accept that, Joe Robinson will do another five years in Peterhead prison". I said: "I will consider it". I went home and told my wife, who said: "Oh, we must accept it - we would never be able to hold our heads up in Glasgow - and we were family friends". So I gave in.

Now when the tribunal of the three Law Lords met to homologate the findings, the Chairman said: "What's the reason of the great difference for this person?" (meaning me). And Morrison replied: "I may say the Treasury Board were prepared to go to £2500 for this man". I had lost £1000!

(Signed) H. Warren Hutchinson

179 Rathgar Road.

Witness: Seán Brennan, Lieut-Col.

2nd June 1953.

S U M M A R Y

I have given in detail what may appear to have in some cases little if anything to do with military history - but in every case it is proof that I was not a politician but military, and nearly always regarded as head of the I.R.A. in Scotland - as Seamus Reader was able, in just the same way, to hide his identity, the camouflage in both cases being successful.

When I first became an active member of Sinn Fein the annual income was £700, from about a dozen clubs; ultimately it rose to £22,000 from 88 clubs.

ARCHBISHOP MANNIX

An article in the "Irish Press" has reminded me of his visit to Scotland.

When he came over he was not allowed to come within about ten miles of Glasgow. I had control of the arrangements. We held large meetings, especially one in Airdrie in Lanarkshire, which was attended by a huge crowd (about 20,000); the enthusiasm was terrific, and the collection close on four figures; ladies gave jewellery, and there were pound notes galore.

As we drove back to Glasgow our car was stopped by the mounted police. Jack O'Sheehan, who was in the front seat, was asked who we were and what was in the boxes at the back. He said I was the boss and one officer who happened to know me asked what was in the boxes. I said "Dynamite". They tried to follow, and phoned ahead, but we got away. We had a number of meetings around Glasgow, and we hired a different car each day, but there was a special private car for Dr. Mannix, which was put at his disposal by an anonymous donor. He was the guest of the Nazareth nuns, at their various convents.

This has no military relevance, except for the fact that here again it was not for Sinn Fein but for I.R.A. activities they tried to get me arrested.

However on the whole the Scotch, especially the Gaels, were more or less sympathetic. A number of us joined the Scottish Nationalist Party, of which Hugh MacDiarmid (C.M. Grieve) was head (as well as being the greatest living Scottish poet). With him I became friendly. But the secretary turned out to be a bitter anti-Catholic, and we resigned. He later formed a party with the word 'Covenant' in its name - obviously after the Covenanters.